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Subject: Weekly Update: Our work to reduce violent crime



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Friends,

As we enter 2018, it's important to make sure we all know what we're doing to address the top concern I hear everywhere I go in our city: Our unacceptable rate of violent crime.

Make no mistake: It is our No. 1 challenge as a city, and our commitment to reducing violent crime is the No. 1 driver of decisions we make every single day at City Hall.

In 2017, we saw an encouraging decline in our homicide rate (about 12 percent), though we're quick not to celebrate it. Any loss of life, just one, is something we must work tirelessly to prevent.

But we also saw a frustrating increase (9.9 percent) in our most serious crimes. This increase was driven largely by auto thefts and thefts from autos; we saw slight declines in residential burglaries.

It's also worth noting that of our solved homicides, 95 percent of victims and suspects were known to each other.

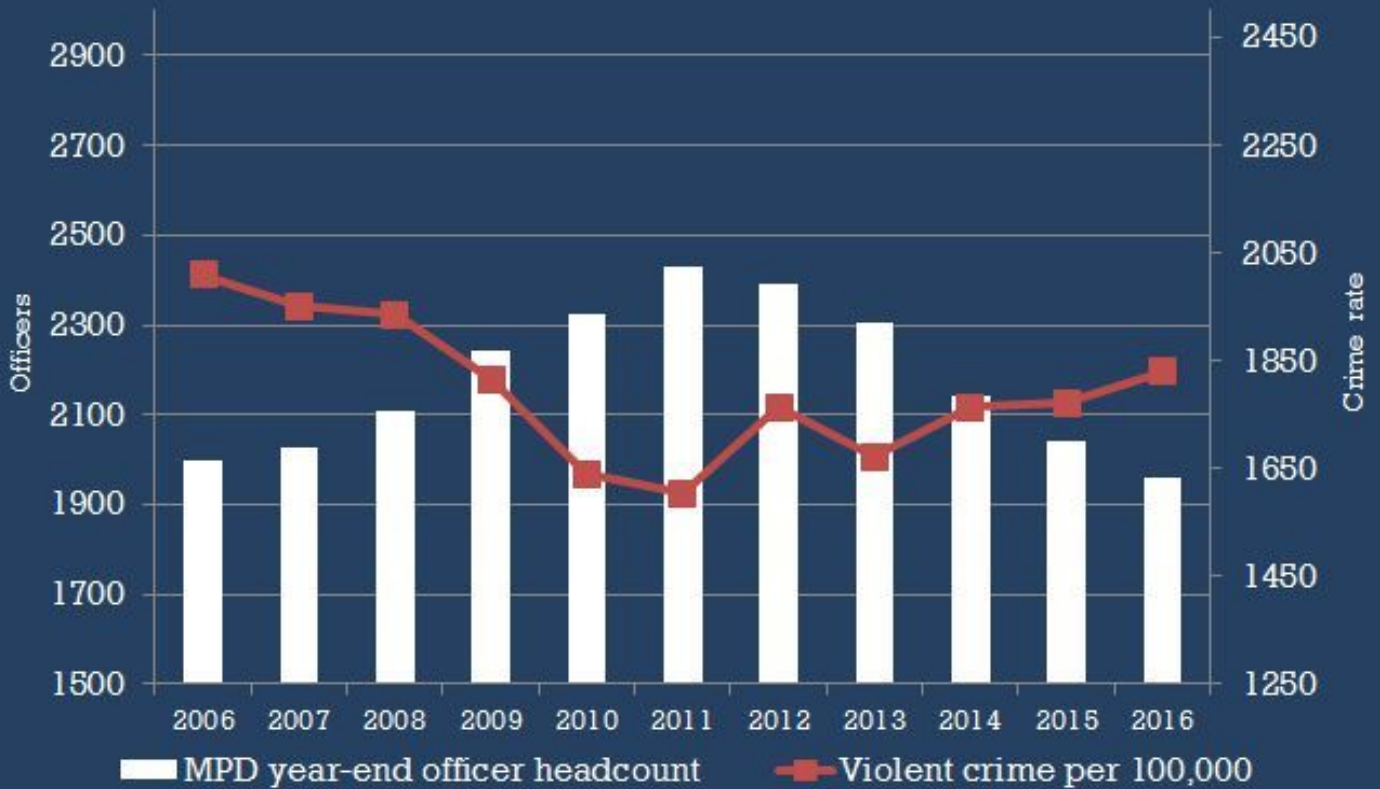
So, how do we address crime? By continuing to implement our wide-ranging, long-term crime strategy, one based on best practices from across the country.

One of the largest impacts I can have from City Hall is in rebuilding the Memphis Police Department, and we are seeing some success there. You already know that the largest class in seven years graduated from the academy in August. **Another large class of about 80 officers is set to graduate next week.**

Coupled with reduced attrition thanks to better pay and benefits, we look for the 2017 starting classes to provide the first net gain of officers in seven years.

This chart, which we've shared before, helps explain why rebuilding MPD is so important:

Memphis Violent Crime Rate vs. MPD Officer Count



We group our crime reduction efforts into five areas. Here they are, with highlights of items we've acted on listed in each category:

Rebuilding MPD. We had 2,452 officers in November 2011; we started 2018 with about 1,960. That's up from about 1,915 in early August 2017, which was the lowest number in at least a decade. In addition to what we shared above, here's more:

- Two recruit classes are funded in this budget.
- We expanded recruitment to neighboring cities.
- We worked to fix an antiquated hiring process — we're now allowing candidates to apply online, for instance.
- We brought back the PST program to allow commissioned officers to focus on violent crime and created the Blue Path program as a pipeline to become a PST.
- We landed a nationally unprecedented \$6.1 million grant for retention bonuses and to boost recruiting, and more than 80 percent of the eligible officers signed up for those bonuses.
- Officer compensation has improved, including three pay increases in 18 months and the restoration of pre-65 health insurance subsidies.

Retaining our veteran and talented officers is key to rebuilding the force, and I'm encouraged to share that just 123 officers left the force in 2017. That's down from the 185 who left in 2015, and it's closer to the norm for an average year.

Offering more for our youth. A 2015 study showed that Memphis had the highest percentage of

“disconnected” youth — who either aren’t in school or aren’t employed — in the country.

- We increased summer youth jobs from 1,000 to 1,250.
- We partnered with the My Brother’s Keeper Alliance to provide nearly 500 jobs or second interviews to young people in June.
- Library hours expanded, including 10 neighborhood branches that are now open an extra day.
- We increased community center programming, with spring break camps and literacy components in summer camps, as well as introducing after-school programming.

Reducing recidivism

- We supported successful bills in the state legislature to lower barriers to expungement. In the 2018 legislative session, we will lobby for reduced fees for diversion programs.
- We’re paying for expungement fees through our privately-funded Better Memphis Fund, which removes hurdles to the workforce for people with nonviolent records.

Increasing economic opportunity

- Some 12,000 Memphians were employed in late 2017 who weren’t employed when I took office on Jan. 1, 2016. Our monthly unemployment rate in September 2017 was the city’s lowest in at least 27 years.
- We actively pursued corporate headquarters in Memphis — such as ServiceMaster, which retained some 1,200 jobs.
- We’re raising awareness of 15,000 open jobs in Memphis area — plus free training, education and assistance — at opportunitymemphis.com.
- The MWBE share of City of Memphis contracting has increased by 69 percent since taking office.

Lobbying for stiffer sentences for violent crime

- We successfully lobbied for a stiffer sentence for felons in possession of guns, as gun violence is a large driver of violent crime.
- We successfully lobbied for stronger laws to address domestic violence, as this also makes up a large category of our crime.

That’s what we’re doing, and we’re going to continue to do more. But similar to [what I said at this week’s New Year’s prayer breakfast](#), we can’t do this alone. We don’t just *want* the community to join; we *need* you.

To start 2017, I called Memphians to join us in one of three ways — mentor a young person, read to a kid, or adopt a block. I’m proud to share that about 1,000 new volunteers have decided to read regularly to a kid. And I’m very proud that city government alone delivered 140 new mentors.

These are great numbers. But we need to grow them.

Want to join? Reply to this email and we’ll point you in the right direction.

Remembering Lewis Donelson: I was reminded of our call to service yesterday, when I learned that Lewis Donelson had passed away. Mr. Donelson wrote this in his autobiography: "I feel that God puts us here to try to make the world a better place, and those of us with special opportunities and special talents owe more than anyone else."

As we approach the 50th anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King's assassination in our city, I thought you'd be interested to know this tidbit of history: Mr. Donelson was on the Memphis City Council in 1968. Six days before Dr. King's assassination, Mr. Donelson pushed for a council resolution that would have recognized the sanitation workers union and provided a path to resolve the strike. It missed passing by a single vote.

Mr. Donelson was one of the great leaders and statesmen of our era in Memphis, and he will be missed.

Yours,



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